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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, ultimate judge of the universe, You have been our dwelling place in all generations, and we are sustained by Your steadfast love. Today, surround our Senators with the shield of Your favor as they labor to keep America strong. Lord, teach them to be obedient to Your commands, doing Your good will as Your presence fills them with joy. Manifest Your power through their labors so that this Nation will be exalted by righteousness. Help our Senators to put their trust in You and to recapture their trust in one another as Your angels guard them in all their ways.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 29, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a

Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MARKEY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

IMPROVING THE PROVISION OF MEDICAL SERVICES AND BENEFITS TO VETERANS—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 297, S. 1950.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 297, S. 1950, a bill to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I was happy to move this on behalf of Chairman SANDERS, who has put together this bill which is supported by 25 different service organizations.

Following my remarks this morning and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with the majority controlling the first half and Republicans the final half.

Following morning business, the Senate will begin consideration of S. 1926, the flood insurance legislation.

We were able to reach an agreement for several amendments. All amendments must be offered by 3 p.m. today.

Multiple rollcall votes are possible today. Senators will be notified when these votes are scheduled.

OUR ECONOMY

Mr. President, over the last 45 months America's private sector has

added more than 8 million jobs. We heard that from the President last night. The stock market has soared. Productivity has never in the history of our country been higher, and Americans have even started building and buying homes again. But while the economy is gaining momentum, for far too many Americans the hopeful headlines don't match the grim reality.

For the last decades middle-class Americans have seen their paychecks shrink even as corporate profits climb and the wealthiest are doing better and better. As the President said last night, there is nothing wrong with people making money. We are all happy they are doing well. But the average CEO's income is multiplied 250 times, and the people who work for that CEO are making less and less every year. That has happened during the last years. The richest 1 percent have had their wealth increased by three times while during that same period of time the middle class has had its earning capacity drop 10 percent. Average Americans are working even longer and harder than they were 30 years ago and receiving less in the way of remuneration.

The difference is this. Their hard work isn't paying off the way it used to. We must change that, and we can change that. It is not too late to ensure that Americans' success is determined by the strength of their spirit instead of the size of their bank account.

Fifty years ago, in his first State of the Union Address, Lyndon Johnson declared unconditional war on poverty. We have seen a lot of news accounts on that anniversary during the last month or so. But here is what Lyndon Johnson said 50 years ago:

Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope . . . because of their poverty. . . . Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity.

Thanks to the innovative programs created five decades ago, including Medicare and school lunch programs,

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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S557